



THE SUS
PENDED
STEP OF
COMMUNIZATION

PART I : COMMUNISATION VS SOCIALISATION
PART II: COMMUNISATION VS SPHERES

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PART I:

COMMUNISATION vs SOCIALISATION

The ultimate point of the reciprocal implication between the classes is that in which the proletariat seizes the means of production. It seizes them, but cannot appropriate them. An appropriation carried out by the proletariat is a contradiction in terms, because it could only be achieved through its own abolition.

– Théorie Communiste, Self-organisation is the first act of the revolution; it then becomes an obstacle which the revolution has to overcome, June 2006

The seizure of the elements of capital.

Appropriation or communisation

What is at stake in communisation is the overcoming of a defensive position, in which proletarians fight to maintain their conditions and therefore their reciprocal implication with capital, through a seizure of capital, not in the sense of a socialisation, i.e. a mode of managing the economy, but rather by constituting a community of individuals that are directly its constituents. It is true that societies, i.e. communities dominated and represented by a class, also always constitute the unity of individuals that belong to them, but individuals are only members of societies as average class individuals; singular individuals have no social existence. Communisation is accomplished *through* seizing the means of subsistence, of communication, of transport and of production in the restricted sense. The communisation of relations, the constitution of a human community / communism, is realized for, in and through the struggle against capital.

In this struggle, the seizure of the material means of production cannot be separated from the transformation of proletarians into immediately social individuals: it is one and the same activity, and this identity is brought about by the present form of the contradiction between the proletariat and capital. The radical difference from socialisation is that it is not a matter of changing the property status of the material means of production. In communisation there is no *appropriation* of goods by any entity whatsoever; no state, commune, or council to represent and dominate proletarians in expropriating capital and thus carry out an *appropriation*. Changing the property regime entails the constitution of a new form of economy, namely socialism, even if it is called an economy of solidarity. When socialism was really possible, communism was postponed to the end of time, and yet socialism could never be what it claimed to be: the transition to communism. This fact made it finally the counterrevolution adequate to the only real revolution of the period. Communisation doesn't constitute an economy. It makes use of everything, but has no other aim than itself. Communisation is not the struggle *for* communism; it is communism that constitutes itself against capital.

The embroilment of communisation and socialisation

If the action of communisation is the outlet of class struggle in the revolutionary crisis, the same act of seizure could be, as we have seen, either communisation or socialisation. Any action of this type can take one or the other form; it all depends on the dynamic and on the context, constantly in transformation. In other words: everything depends on the struggle against capital, which either deepens and extends itself or loses pace and perishes very quickly. Everything also depends on the struggle within the struggle against capital. The constitution of communism is embroiled with the constitution of one last alternative socio-economic capitalist form. Until communisation is completed there will be a permanent tendency for some entity to be constituted which strives to make the seizure of material means into a political and economic socialisation. The persistence of such a brake, able to be utilised by a capitalist counter-revolution, consists in the persistence until the very end of a dimension within the revolutionary movement of the affirmation and liberation of labour, because the revolutionary movement is and remains a movement of the class of labour even in the overcoming

of activities as labour. The affirmation remains as long as capital is not yet abolished; this is to say, as long as capital still exists as opposed to the proletariat, even the proletariat on the point of abolishing it, i.e. of abolishing itself. In this context the proletariat retains a positivity, even if this positivity of labour is not reaffirmed by capital anymore; rather it is reactivated in the revolutionary process, as social reproduction becomes a process dependent on the action of proletarians.

Past revolutions show us only too well:
'the red flag can be waved against the red flag'
until the Freikorps arrive

Capital 'will not hesitate' to proclaim once again that labour is the 'only productive activity' in order to stop the movement of its abolition and in order to reassert its control over it as soon as it can. This dimension can only be overcome by the victory of communisation, which is the achieved abolition of the capitalist class and the proletariat. The overcoming of the counter-revolution will not always be irenic, it will not always take place 'within the movement' and it will not be a true and quick version of the 'withering of the state' which was foreseen in socialism. Any form, whether it be a state form or a para-state form, will always do anything to maintain itself even in the name of its ultimate withering! This sclerosis and perpetuation are not 'counter-revolutionary tendencies within the revolution', but rather *The* counter-revolution. The capitalist counter-revolution *in opposition* to the revolution.

Communism doesn't fight against democracy, but the counter-revolution claims to be democratic

It is in the very name of the abolition of classes that radical democracy will do everything to maintain or restore elective structures, which it claims are necessary to prevent the formation of a new ruling stratum, one self-appointed and uncontrolled. The constitution of communism is embroiled with the constitution of a final form of socialism even if the movement that bore it, the labour movement, has definitively disappeared. The struggle to 'bring to reason' the fractions of the proletariat which are most active in the

expropriation of capital will be all the more violent when it presents itself as the defence of the democratic revolution, refusing to let the minority compromise the gains of the majority.

The defence of gains is the possibility of a counter-revolutionary phase

Communisation will never make any gains. All the expropriations that constitute the immediate community will have their character as pure expropriations and wildcat takeovers contested. They will be proclaimed socialisations as soon as the movement decelerates, and a para-state authority is set up in order to defend what at *that moment* appears as gains and as elements of the formation of a potential new economy. The class recognizes itself as divided and diverse in order to abolish itself. The abolition of the proletariat as the dissolution of other classes implies the internal need of the proletariat for these other classes, to absorb them in dissolving them and, at the same time, the contradiction with them. Communisation lives constantly in the conditions of its own sclerosis. Everything will happen on a geographical plane, a horizontal plane, and not on a sectoral plane differentiating types of activities. Limits will be everywhere, and the generalized embroilment of revolution and counter-revolution will manifest itself in multiple and chaotic conflicts. The proletariat abolishes itself in the human community that it produces. It is the inner and dynamic contradictions within such a process that give content and force to the counter-revolution, because in each one capital can regenerate itself. Because for the class to abolish itself is to overcome its *autonomy*, *wherein the content and force of the capitalist counter-revolution reside*.

Extension is the movement of victory; deceleration that of counter-revolution.

Without it being an explicit strategy, capital will struggle to recover social control in two ways. On the one hand, states will fight to re-establish their domination and restore exploitation. On the other hand, capitalist society will continue to maintain itself on the totally ambiguous bases of popular power and self-management. In formal subsumption, workers had long demanded the entire product of labour; this demand will now find a new lease of life and will constitute the ideal content for the reproduction of

capitalist relations and a basis for a 'solid' resistance against communisation. These factions may fight against each other or align themselves depending on the situation and hence on the development of the movement of communisation. The action of the capitalist class could be as much military as it could consist in social counter-measures and the construction of conflicts based on the capacities of the capitalist mode of production. The revolution itself could push the capitalist mode of production to develop in an unforeseeable manner, from the resurrection of slavery to self-management. But above all the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production will occur in a diffuse way as close as possible to the revolution, reproducing itself in all the moments where communisation is led by its own nature into a sclerosis of the simple organisation of the survival of proletarians, that is, into socialisation. The capitalist class can equally centralise its counter-revolutionary action in the State as it can decentralize the confrontation by regionalising it, dividing the classes into social categories, even ethnicising them, because a situation of crisis is also an inter-capitalist conflict. If, in an inter-capitalist conflict, one of the capitalist sites manages, through the general devalorisation that the crisis entails, to represent a global solution for all capitals, it will represent such a solution for the vanquished as well.

The revolution will not be won in a straight line

Some fractions of the insurgent proletariat will be smashed, others will be 'turned back', rallying to measures for the conservation of survival. Other insurrections will pick up where they leave off. Certain of those turned back or bogged down will resume wildcat expropriations, and the organisation of the struggle by those who struggle and uniquely for the struggle, without representation, without control by anyone in the name of anything, thereby taking up once again the constitution of communism, which is not a goal of the struggle but rather its content. Counter-revolutionary ideologies will be numerous, starting perhaps with that of the survival of the economy: preserving economic mechanisms, not destroying all economic logic, in order to then construct a new economy. The survival of the economy is the survival of exchange, whether this exchange uses money, any kind of voucher or chit, or even simply barter, which can be adorned with the name of mutual aid between workers! The situation where everything is for free and the complete absence of any

form of accounting is the axis around which the revolutionary community will construct itself. Only the situation where everything is for free will enable the bringing together of all the social strata which are not directly proletarian and which will collapse in the hyper crisis. Only the situation where everything is for free will integrate/abolish all the individuals who are not directly proletarian, all those 'without reserves' (including those whom revolutionary activity will have reduced to this condition), the unemployed, the ruined peasants of the 'third world', the masses of the informal economy. These masses must be dissolved as middle strata, as peasants, in order to break the personal relations of dependence between 'bosses' and 'employees' as well as the situation of 'small independent producers' within the informal economy, by taking concrete communist measures which force all these strata to join the proletariat, that is, to realise their 'proletarianisation'...

Proletarians who communise society will have no need of 'frontism'. They will not seek out a common program for the victims of capital. If they engage in frontism they are dead, if they remain alone they are also dead. They must confront all the other classes of society as the sole class not able to triumph by remaining what it is. The measures of communisation are the abolition of the proletariat because, in addition to its unification in its abolition, they dissolve the basis of existence of a multitude of intermediate strata (managerial strata of capitalist production and reproduction) which are thereby absorbed into the process of communisation and millions (if not billions) of individuals that are exploited through the product of their labour and not the sale of their labour-power. At the regional level as much as at the global one, communisation will have an action that one could call 'humanitarian', even if this term is currently unpronounceable, because communisation will take charge of all the misery of the world. *Human activity as a flux is the only presupposition of its collective, that is to say individual, pursuit*, because, as it is self-presupposing, it has no conception of what a product is and can thus give plentifully. The proletariat, acting as a class, dissolves itself as a class through these acts of seizure, because in them it overcomes its 'autonomy'.

Democracy and the solidarity economy will be the two big ideological constructions to defeat.

Democracy and the solidarity economy will combine with other systems depending on the time and place. They will combine above all with the ideology of communities that could be very diverse: national, racial, religious. Probably more dangerous: the spontaneous and inevitable constitution of local communities (“we are at home here”). Such communities will be of infinite variations and their ideologies can take on all political hues: conservative, reactionary, democratic, and of course, above all revolutionary - and here the embroilment of revolution and counter-revolution is the rule. For there is no situation that, viewed unilaterally, would be without a way out for capital. It is the action of the proletariat that will prevent capital from producing a superior mode of valorisation for which it can always find the conditions in every crisis and every confrontation with the proletariat, from these three points of view:

- the diversification and segmentation of the proletariat
- the dissolution and absorption of multiple exploited strata outside of a direct subsumption of their labour under capital
- inter-capitalist conflicts into which the proletariat is drafted, for whom these conflicts have a integrative and reproductive function.

All of this provides the counter-revolution with its force and its content, which are in a direct relation with the immediate, empirical necessities of communisation (its dynamic contradictions, or the contradictions of its dynamic).

There is no ideological struggle; the practical struggle is theoretical.

One must not imagine the anti-ideological struggle as distinct from communisation itself. It is through communisation that ideologies are fought, because they are part of what the movement abolishes. The constitution of communism cannot avoid violent confrontations with the counter-revolution, but these ‘military’ aspects do not lead to the constitution of a front. If such a front is constituted the revolution will be lost, at least where the

front is situated, and until its dissolution. The revolution will be both geographic and without any fronts: the starting points of communisation will always be local and will undergo immediate and very rapid expansion, like the start of a fire. Even once extinguished these fires will smoulder under self-management and citizen communities. Communism will arise from an immense fight. The process of communisation will indeed be a period of transition, but not at all a calm period of socialist and/or democratic construction between a chaotic revolutionary period and communism. It will itself be the chaos between capital and communism. It is clear that such a prospect, though well-founded, has nothing exciting about it! It is neither 'barbarism', a meaningless term, nor the royal road of the to-morrows that sing! This is a perspective that is anchored in the current situation of capital and in struggles - in the current struggle between the proletariat and restructured capital in its crisis. It is a perspective which poses the overcoming of these struggles, not in a straight line, but in a deepening of the crisis of capital currently occurring.

The embroilment of the revolution and counter-revolution implicates all organisation which the movement of class struggle takes on. Any given organisation, any collective, or any other form can be the form taken by organised struggle or else tend towards the representation of this struggle, and develop, in a situation of the crumbling of the state, toward a para-state form. It is not a matter of the opposition between organisation and spontaneity (everything is always spontaneous and organised) but of the opposition between expropriation and appropriation, communisation and socialisation; the latter necessitating that society exists, that is to say that it is something other than 'people', than the 'people' of which we shall now speak. In the struggle in 2003 in France we could see proletarians construct between themselves what could be called an inter-subjectivity that was not beholden to the unions, leaving the latter to organise a merely scenic representation of this unity. Nevertheless the struggle did not overcome the general limit of what it was at the time: radical democratism, the political consolidation of the limits of the struggle as a class through proposing solutions to the 'problems of capital', for example the 'defence of public services'. This was truly an inter-subjectivity in that (still proletarian) subjects linked together in the

* Translators note: The to-morrows that sing is a phrase employed by the French communist party and its official poet Louis Aragon to describe their claim on the future.

face of their object – capital. In Greece in 2008 the riot was fundamentally an inter-subjectivity. In confronting the question of democracy, the inter-subjectivity of the Greek rioters confronted class belonging as an exterior constraint, through the absence of demands, and beyond the foreclosure represented by radical democratism. In the movement of the abolition of capital, the latter (capital) is de-objectified: the subject-object relation is abolished along with the capital-proletariat relation. (We should remember that this abolition is the content of the revolutionary *process*, communisation, and as long as it is not yet finished there will still be a subject-object relation, even if the subject is in the process of abolishing its object as such; it is *in this relation* that the abolition is achieved, that is to say that proletarians abolish the capital which makes them proletarian, i.e. pure subjects confronted with the object – capitalist society as a whole). The revolutionary process of de-objectification of capital is thus also a process of the destruction of the separated subjectivity of the proletariat. It is this process which we designate as the self-transformation of proletarians into immediately social individuals. This transformation can never be said to have occurred before it is completed; in this sense it is proletarians that make the revolution all the way to the end, because all the way to the end they abolish the capital that makes them proletarians.

Communisation and socialisation do not form a contradiction

The contradiction remains that between capital and the proletariat. It does not become an internal contradiction within the proletariat. Even if a total opposition between the two perspectives arises, they are embroiled with one another and both implicated in the contradiction capital–proletariat. The struggle of the proletariat against capital becomes the abolition of classes by the expropriation of capital. But this very action, in its opposition to capital, revives the affirmation of labour when it is interrupted by the capitalist class (it is there that the gains exist as we have seen). This provisional affirmation, which is an affirmation of labour by default, advances a social state whose outcome would be a social State, thus a counter-revolutionary form. In this case, the revolutionary movement must oppose itself to that which it itself has just posed. The process of self-transformation into immediately social individuals can, in the struggle against capital and thus the capitalist class, also be a struggle against prole-

tarians defending the proletarian condition. A struggle of communisation against socialisation.

The counter-revolution is constructed on the limits of the revolution

This is what this text has tried to show a little more ‘concretely’. In the period that saw the revolutionary attempts from 1917 to 1937, the general structure of the capital-proletariat contradiction bore within it the affirmation of the class of labour and thus the construction of socialism. Now the contradiction bears within it the calling into question of class belonging and thus the general structure poses communisation. This structure doesn’t mean that limits don’t still exist, even if the direction of the movement is toward their overcoming. The limit is consubstantial with every revolutionary measure, and this limit is only overcome in the following measure. It is the class character of the movement of communisation which is its limit. This movement is the overcoming of its own limited character, since it is the abolition of classes and thus of the proletariat. The proletarian is the individual deprived of objectivity, whose objectivity is opposed to him in capital. He is reduced to pure subjectivity, he is the free subject, bearer of a labour-power only able to become labour in action after being sold, and then put to work by its capitalist owner. The subject free of everything is bound to objectivity in itself, the fixed capital that subsumes its labour-power, submitting it to incorporation into the labour process. The abolition of capital is the abolition of objectivity in itself through the seizure of material means, and the abolition of the proletarian subject through the production of the immediately social individual. It is what we call the simultaneous de-subjectification and de-objectification produced by the seizure of the social totality, an action that destroys this totality as something distinct from individuals. The distinct totality is the independent society, through its division into classes and its representation by the dominant class. The abolition of classes is the abolition of society. The creation of socialist or even ‘communist’ society is always the maintenance of the independence of the community from its members, which are only social by the mediation of society. Communism is the end of all mediation between individuals and their constantly changing groupings of affinity. But in the revolution there is still mediation by capital since revolutionary activity is the abolition of capital! Communisation,

in so far as it is mediated by its own object, always carries the possibility that its mediation autonomizes itself in the constitution of the revolution as a different structure than revolutionary action. This tendency towards institutionalisation of the revolution, and the victory of capital, will continually exist. Communisation is revolution within the revolution, the overcoming of class autonomy, but revolution and counter-revolution are continually face to face. The steps of communisation are those of a tightrope walker.

B.L., June 2009

PART II:

COMMUNISATION vs SPHERES

‘Communisation vs Socialisation’ (the first part of ‘The suspended step of communisation’) had two aims. On the one hand, it showed that seizing elements of capital might be ‘communisation’ – that is, pure ‘dis-appropriation’, the abolition of all property relations, even collective or ‘proletarian’ property relations. The seizure of elements of capital would aim at the constitution of a *new community of individuals* – creating amongst themselves, in their singularity, unmediated relations – in the course of their struggle against capital, as the very content of this struggle. But, on the other hand, this process of ‘communisation’ (that is to say, of the production of communism) has an intricate link with another possible content of these seizures – that is, as appropriations, socialisations aiming instead at the constitution of a *new economy*, which would be self-managed, social, popular, and counter-revolutionary. Each of these two possibilities is, for the other, *its own proper other*. They find themselves in a conflictual relation, in which each one, in its own practice, recognises the other as necessary, as a moment of itself.

In this process of class struggle, which leads to the abolition of classes, individuals were *ipso facto* posed as being beyond gender, since they established a community of immediately social individuals.

This second part of the text tries to explain this ‘ipso facto’. This overcoming perceived as naturally included ‘in the movement’ – as something that goes *without saying*, due to the nature and content of the movement – should be subjected as such to critique. It is not sufficient to say that communisation, being communisation, is by definition the overcoming

of genders. Although distinct ‘fronts’ within the struggle cannot possibly exist, no key-element of class society will be overcome without being attacked for itself.

The analysis of gender domination in capitalism shows that this domination is immediately identical to the division of all social activities into two spheres.

The sexed character of all categories of capital signifies a general distinction in society between men and women. This general distinction acquires as its social content that which is the synthesis of all the sexualities of the categories: the creation of the division between public and private. This distinction is the synthesis because the cmp[capitalist mode of production] is apolitical economy. In other words, the cmp, because it rests on the sale of the labour power and a social production that exists as such only for the market (value), rejects as “non-social” the moments of its own reproduction which escape direct submission to the market or to the immediate process of production: the private. The private is the private of the public, always in a hierarchical relation of definition by and submission to the public.

– TC, *Response to the American comrades*

The revolutionary process of the production of communism will take place within and, most notably, *against* the generalised crisis of capital. The crisis of the reproduction of the relation of exploitation is, in equal measure, the inability of capital to exploit proletarians profitably and the inability of proletarians to offer sufficiently cheap labour power (sufficiently under its value) in order to valorise capital. In other words, proletarians cannot live on a prayer and, in particular, their wives cannot cook it into the reproduction of labour power!

Already in the present moment of the crisis (a crisis still in its beginning), there is an ‘illegitimacy of wage demands’. This means that demands for pay and/or working conditions are no longer ‘systemic’. That is, they no longer function, with capital, as a system able to combine an increase in the rate of exploitation (rate of surplus value) with an increase in real wages (a system described by capital’s proponents as the ‘sharing of productivity gains’). In the present moment, these demands are no longer adequate. In the deepening crisis of the class relation – in the moment

when inter-capitalist exchanges are blocked and states are about to wage war against proletarians (and against each other, as well), in order to force the proletarians into trash-zones and thus to make possible the continuation of a savage exploitation – in this moment what is at stake is survival. The struggle against capital thereby becomes a struggle for survival itself. This will be the starting point, on a much larger scale, of what had already begun in Argentina in a limited and transitory way: the seizure of elements of capital.

Struggles against capital, against both its crisis and its anti-proletarian offensive, are already struggles concerning the reproduction of the lives of proletarians. Proletarians will seize those elements of capital necessary for their survival, and these seizures will be revolutionary actions against capital. Argentinian proletarians ‘recovered’ firms abandoned by their owners and got them up and running according to the well known principle: *We produce, we sell, we pay ourselves*. That was self-management, but it was only possible in a context where the money thus obtained still functioned as money and could be exchanged against means of subsistence. However, in a situation of extreme crisis, that would no longer be possible; it will be necessary to seize the means of subsistence themselves (something that happened in the case of refrigerated warehouses in Argentina).

Anyway, generalised self-management is devoid of meaning. It would be overcome in the course of the struggle that self-management would necessarily have to wage against capital, as well as by the complete absence of a dynamic of accumulation internal to self-management. The latter can only represent a phase in a process leading either to communising measures (for the continuation of the struggle against capital) or to a latent or open counter-revolutionary regression.

In Argentina, the movements of the unemployed organised various activities: ‘production workshops’ (baking, collectively gardening, making bricks and packaging household products) whose products were destined for self-subsistence or for selling to others. These ‘workshops’, most often under collective self-management, could be considered as embryonic forms of a parallel economy. This parallel economy had – to a very limited extent – begun to constitute a community of fighting proletarians. In and through that community, a transformation of relations had begun, in par-

ticular of gender relations, by putting into question the division of social practice into two separate spheres of activity: one private, the other public.

Whether in a revolutionary situation or in every struggle in which they are opposed to capital, proletarian women always bring into question, practically, the existence of the private sphere. When working women strike, it is never just a strike. It is always a *women's* strike – because the private sphere, to which they are inextricably linked, is pushed into the heart of the public sphere. In that way, women put into question not only the existence of this private sphere but also that of the public sphere, by means of the intimate and personal character of the relations of struggle, which women create, relations which challenge the political and social character claimed by public activities in distinction to private.

The participation of women in wage-labour is not, as such, an incursion into the public sphere since it does not challenge the existence of that sphere. Indeed, women's wage-labour is organised in specific forms – particular sectors, managerial hierarchies (the glass-ceiling) and wage levels. These forms, which are easily identified (and which have already been analysed by feminists – as well as by all sociologists and economists worth their salt), have been designed in order to preserve the existence of a private sphere for the reproduction of labour-power, to which women are assigned.

The market for women's wage-labour makes the waged woman into *both* the form par excellence of restructured wage-labour in general (flexible, precarious) *and* a form that is, in itself, absolutely specific. The presence of women in wage-labour is thus a presence at once 'disarmed' and controlled – confined to a section of the public sphere that thereby becomes a sort of annex to the private sphere. It is only when the walls surrounding this annex are broken through (for example, in a strike), that working women erupt into the public sphere.

We could say not only that every women's struggle is feminist, but also that every women's struggle contains the opposition of women to their gender belonging – paradoxically, even if they assert themselves as women!

Here are some extracts from an account of women's struggles in Argentina:

Women were first to blockade the roads when their companions found themselves jobless, but they were made invisible. They fought for food, for health and for dignity, as they were doing everyday in their homes. With struggle, organisation, and camaraderie, women began to question the place they occupied: in their homes, in organisations and in the world.

'To go out is a revolution', said Viviana (age 33, mother of five and a housewife since she was 16) from the Movement of Unemployed Workers (MTD) of Lugano. She describes the process as something that didn't occur in one day, but rather as a (joyful) journey with no possibility of return: 'Before, I had to wake up at 4am since my husband had a job; when he would leave I had to clean the house before the children woke up, help them get ready, bring them to school, come back, feed them, do housework, and not to miss one single episode of the novella. After, he was jobless.'

In 2001, Viviana attended a parents' meeting held in the space where children received after school tutoring. She liked it and began attending regularly. They discussed unemployment and various problems in the neighborhood, and they began to devise a plan of action that would include everyone. Viviana's husband would leave her every Saturday, uttering the same sentence: 'You're wasting your time.' That was before the creation of the MTD.

The first time Graciela Cortes went out, it was only a couple hundred meters from her house. She was 40 when she agreed to teach sewing to other jobless women. 'Yes, it got me into trouble at home. In spite of the fact that I was still doing housework, still taking care of the children. I was doing everything, yet I had problems. I decided to go out. First politics was not really interesting to me, but when I began to miss the meetings, I realised politics was inside me. My husband would tell me not to go, but I explained to him: alone I won't get anything, we need to be a multitude.'

Graciela took part in the 18 day blockade at Isidro Casanova with the CCC (Corriente Clasista combativa). She asked herself out loud:

– What good will it do to me to obey him if we eventually split? I have no regret. I did things I would never have done before. All that thanks to the sewing machine and Women's Meetings.

– The Meetings?

– *They open your mind. I changed in the Meetings.*

– *Why?*

– *You see every woman.*

For a while, Gladis Roldan was pleased to say that she was a member of the women's subcommittee of the lead-committee of the inhabitants of the asentamiento Maria Elena (a piece of occupied land, which became, over time, a stronghold of CCC in La Matanza). Then, in 1989, she attended a National Meeting of Women for the first time. During a debate, a woman asked her: 'Why is it a subcommittee? You could just as well be in the lead-committee.' With a glowing look, Gladys said: 'You can imagine how we came back [after that]!'. The discussion with the men lasted two months. Finally, the women moved into the lead-committee and the subcommittee of women – may it rest in peace – was disbanded.

These quotes confirm that the existence of private and public spheres was practically challenged, but we must also consider occasions of very harsh opposition from certain male proletarians.

There are female comrades who declare in the assembly: 'I couldn't come to the "piquete" (road blockade) because my husband beat me, because he locked me down.' For that, the women-question helped us quite a bit... because you've seen that it was us, the women, who were the first to go out for food, job positions, and health... And it brought very difficult situations – even death. There were husbands who did not tolerate their wives attending a meeting, a 'piquete'. It did happen. I'm not saying it doesn't happen anymore today.

The defense of the male condition is the defense of male domination. It is the defense of the existence of two separated spheres of activity, as we can perceive in the following example:

– I can tell you the story of a female comrade who was involved in the movement when we were nine neighborhoods, in 1996. She was from here, from La Juanita, and she separated from her husband because she couldn't take it anymore. He was jobless, she began to attend and he went crazy, he began to beat her. Then he left. The next morning, he came back, he tied her up, and lit her on fire. She died. He couldn't stand her going out.

– Why?

– *Because going out changes your life.*

‘Going out’ changes one’s life in the strongest sense. That women ‘go out’ into the struggle changes both its form and its content. In the relentless class struggle against the capitalist crisis, the suppression of the two spheres of activity is the condition for victory. For the abolition of classes is not a basis on which the abolition of genders could be based. One can only be accomplished with the other, and vice-versa.

The workers’ program never contemplated the abolition of gender, even under the form of an ultimate perspective beyond the famous period of transition – when only *equality* could have been possible. That is because the communism described by the program was only the *society of associated producers*. But production implies reproduction, the latter taking place on the side as subordinated and dominated. This domination would always have had the allocation of women to childbirth as its content, that by which women exist as such.

The defense of the existence of two spheres is the defense of the existence of economy and politics, of politics as the very condition for the economy.* The public sphere is by nature male and the participation of women in this sphere doesn’t change its nature. Vis-à-vis this political-economic sphere, the private sphere of reproduction persists even if ‘putting women back where they belong’ is difficult in a situation where various aspects of class struggle confront each other (popular power, self-management, wild seizures). When it occurs, it is the sign of a serious defeat, at least locally. In Spain, the withdrawal of women from the front lines took place during the militarisation of militias, a key element for a complete restoration of the State and the victory of the counter-revolution.

Communisation – the production of a community immediate to its members in and through a struggle against capitalist society – is the abolition of classes and of the state regardless of its form (communes, councils,

* The capitalist mode of production, in generalising both the market and wage-labour (which are its twin foundations) is the first mode of production to be a political economy, that is, an economy structurally separating production from domestic activity.

unions, or cooperatives). Communisation is the abolition of all moments of public activity as separate from the private activity of reproduction, which itself cannot exist without exchange and/or distribution. It thus implies also the abolition of exchange and distribution (even of a 'non-exchangeist' sort, since that is only a temporary form before the return to the market, as every measures similar to 'war communism' shows). Communisation integrates production and consumption, as well as production and reproduction. For that reason, all book-keeping – all keeping track of accounts – is abolished, since accounting for 'products' in itself supposes the separation between production and consumption. Most important of all, the abolition of the separation between production and consumption is, in itself, the abolition of women.

Women are abolished by the abolition of the sphere that specifies them. The private sphere becomes 'public', and the public sphere becomes 'private'. Programmatism only had as its objective to get women out of the home, to turn them into proles, to socialise domestic work. It had as its objective the equality of men and women in socialism. The fact that this particular objective was never realised cannot be differentiated from the impossibility of programmatism succeeding on its own terms. Nevertheless, we can specify the impossibility of achieving equality between men and women in a public sphere that has become totalitarian by absorbing the private sphere. For the public sphere remains public, that is to say, economic and political. The reproduction of individuals, who continue to be proletarians, cannot realise itself in a so-called 'unified' (that is to say, single) sphere. Against capital, the reproduction of proletarians assumes that women are assigned to childbirth and thus that all the women are appropriated by all the men – both in general and *in particular*. In this way, the order that founds the family is reconstituted.

The abolition of the public sphere – as opposed to its reconstitution – is thus precisely what will be at stake in the struggle between the revolution and the counter-revolution. It will be, at the same time, the struggle between the abolition of the state and its reconstitution – or better, we might say that the struggle to abolish the state will be nothing other than the struggle to 'privatise' the public sphere!

In the public sphere, leaders of all kinds face a mass of anonymous and replaceable citizen-workers, that is to say, average individual members of

a class (since singular individuals exist only in the private sphere). The abolition of the state and of exchange is the abolition of the public sphere, but it is at the same time the transformation of anonymous and replaceable proletarians into individuals defining themselves in immediately social relationships. They thereby become strictly irreplaceable individuals, relating to one another only as singular individuals, who can be in no way average.

The public sphere is not literally 'privatised' any more than the private sphere is socialised, but it is abolished as a sphere involving relationships between average and anonymous members of classes. The singular, social individual abolishes both the social yet anonymous individual of the public sphere and the singular yet asocial individual of the private sphere. Just as the abolition of classes and of spheres are two aspects of the same communisation – by means of the de-capitalisation of capital and the abolition of all of society – so too the abolition of proletarians and of women are two aspects of the self-transformation of all workers – men and women – and thus of all persons into immediately social individuals, constituted in their entirety (physically, mentally and intellectually).

We have seen how the 'entry' of individual proletarian women into the public sphere of struggle puts into question their definition in the private sphere, as well as how that entrance pits them against proletarian men. However, struggling proletarian men also come up against the capitalist offensive – which is both the capitalist crisis and a set of 'painful but courageous' policies that the state implements to combat the crisis – by taking it out on the bodies of proletarians.

Towards the end of the Argentine movement, women in several of the movements of the unemployed decided to constitute themselves as movements of unemployed women. Bruno Astarian understood these organisations of struggling women – in his interesting pamphlet on the Argentine movement (*Échanges*) – as a weakness, a division within the struggle which occurred towards the end of the movement. The ascendent phase of struggles often masks oppositions that later appear when those struggles decline – but that does not necessarily mean that these oppositions constitute a weakness. From the point of view that considers the abolition of gender to be constitutive of communisation, it looks otherwise.

The self-organisation of women will be an unavoidable moment of the revolutionary process. This statement should be understood in the same manner in which we say, 'self-organisation is the first act of the revolution; it then becomes an obstacle that the revolution must overcome'. The self-organisation of women will be the means given to (those who are still) women to combat that which defines them as women. It will thus also enable them to abolish themselves as such. The overcoming of the state and economy realises itself in the unification of activities: those that are productive as well as those that are reproductive (and those that occur in struggle). This unity will integrate childrearing just as much as car repair and armed combat, if it's still necessary. *The organisations of women will be central because they will be, in themselves, precisely this unity.* Women, struggling as such, can only struggle for a unity that also unifies themselves – in the face of the cleavages that divide each and every one of them: into proletarian and woman, into citizen and woman, and into human being and woman!

However, women's self-organisation will also have to struggle within itself against a tendency, which will necessarily exist, to limit its role to representing and negotiating for women's equality (in recognition of women's 'indispensable contributions'). This 'strictly feminist' tendency will exist in connection with everything that promotes a socialisation of the economy and the state. It is likely that the most 'radical' women, who proclaim their will to abolish women as such, will be called out as 'traitors to the women's cause', as well as to a real and non-sexist democracy. All those who oppose themselves – and these may be the majority – to democratic procedures and/or elected offices will be attacked for wanting 'to confiscate the revolution for themselves and to constitute themselves as an elite co-opting the revolution at the expense of the masses'.

Struggling women and their organisations will have to unite all women without constituting an anti-sexist front: ruined petit-bourgeois women, peasant women, and all those who are 'without employment' – including housewives, whether poor or more or less middle class. The movement of women in the course of the revolution – fighting to constitute a unity of struggling proletarians, without exchange or politics – will integrate these groups *because they are constituted by women – that is to say, because these women belong to a gender which is in crisis – and which they put into crisis.* They will all join the movement against capital and – doing what they have always

done, but never openly and always in a contradictory way – they will lead and organise real life.

This private life is real insofar as it is asocial, public life is all the more false because it is directly social, that is to say, as false as are the economy and politics!

This life used to be private, but the revolution will be the creation of a new life at once intimate and public, totally feminine because it is no longer feminine at all, insofar as it is the abolition of the family, property and the state.

The communising current comes out of the critique and overcoming of left-communism and anti-Leninist councilism. True to its origins by not addressing this question, this current remained fundamentally anti-feminist in its period of total marginalisation. Feminist ideology was interpreted as one of those ‘modernisms’, which – both facing and acting within the decomposition of the program – poses the triade ‘women, the young, and immigrants’ as a new revolutionary subject which could take the place of the proletariat. Of course, there are anti-class feminists, but they do not speak for all feminists. On the contrary, feminism is a diverse and evolving phenomenon. The idea of the self-abolition of the proletariat, which marked a stage in the development of a positive notion of communisation, was based on a working-class positivity which was, paradoxically, at the same time negative. Communisation – which had overcome every idea of a revolutionary nature of the proletariat – understood itself only as an immanent overcoming of that program. That is, it saw, in capital, the same contradiction that the program had seen, that is, a contradiction that is only a contradiction of class – *de jure* non-gendered and thus *de facto* obviously masculine.

However, even if individual communisation theorists did not raise this question, any suspicion that the theory of communisation was itself androcentric (to say it clearly: macho!) must be rejected, since the revolution was posed as producing immediately social individuals – that is to say, individuals beyond any determination that society would give them in advance. The individual was considered to be immediately social, but the question of the distinction between genders remained a blind spot in the theory. The question was resolved ‘ipso facto’ without ever having been posed.

And so, this text – written by a participant in the group/journal *Theorie Communiste* – could only have been written once the group was no longer constituted exclusively by men (a minimal change, but an essential one). Paradoxically, this transformation was only possible because communism was understood to mean the social immediacy of the individual. In effect, the social immediacy of the individual exempted us from raising the question of gender and at the same time permitted us to hope that it would be possible to define communisation as the abolition of gender as well as of classes. This hope has been concretised rather rapidly.

It was not only the aim (that is, communisation itself) that sustained a blow. In class struggle, in communisation, in the production of this immediately social individual, there can be no blind spot, no problems solved only ‘ipso facto’ as concerns men and women. We had to re-open the question of the contradiction between proletariat and capital, that of the contradiction between men and women, of exploitation, and of capital as a contradiction-in-process. This was not done without waves, but at least without tidal waves. It was not done without raising our voices, but at least without conflicts. The fruit was ripe... without a doubt had been ripe for a long time.

Today, a consensus seems to exist in the communising current, which considers the revolution as an abolition of genders as much as of classes. But a debate exists with regard to the question of whether there is a contradiction between genders of the same sort that exists between classes. It is important that this debate should not be only formal, but rather should take into account the crucial importance of women’s struggles in the present moment, as well as their specificity as a crucial element of the abolition of genders through the abolition of classes – and vice versa. That is the objective of this text.

B.L., June 2011

LES PÉTROLEUSES WERE THE SEX WORKERS, WITCHES, AND LADY-PROLES OF
THE PARIS COMMUNE WHOSE 'LOVE OF RIOT' BURNT PARIS TO THE GROUND.

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